

MEHSA Celebrates One Year of Club Activity
Pg. 6

Cultural Clubs Collaborate in “Café De Mundo”
Pg. 7

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

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Fading Traditions



Graduating Class of '26 Not Permitted to Walk Across Commencement Stage
Pg. 2

Riverrun Club Hosts Literature-Trivia Event
Pg. 8

Opinion: Don't Separate the Art from the Artist
Pg. 11

NBA Athlete Uses Religion to Justify Homophobic Remarks
Pg. 12

Cover by Jocelyn Rios

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Brooklyn College Seniors Will Not Walk During The 2026 Commencement

By Key Jones-Ford
Content Creator

The Brooklyn College (BC) Class of 2026 will not walk across the stage during commencement this year, according to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page for the commencement ceremony and an email sent by The Division of Student Affairs.

Undergraduate Student Government (USG) president Cyle Paul sent out an email expressing his disappointment on April 23.

“What makes this even more frustrating is the lack of clear and timely communication to you all, especially with commencement right around the corner,” stated Paul.

The change in programming stems from a scheduling conflict, according to the BC Administration. The Barclays Center is scheduled to host a second graduation the same day at 4:30 p.m., leaving BC to finish its annual commencement at 12 p.m. The second graduation will be for the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Professional Studies (SPS).

The email sent by the BC administration on April 24 says that not walking the stage during graduation is common, clarifying that the classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 were accommodated due to the lack of a strict end time for their ceremonies. Each of these ceremonies were roughly four hours long; the 2026 commencement ceremony will clock in at three hours if it runs perfectly on schedule from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

“This year’s



Posters in Ingersoll Hall, listing the demands of seniors to walk during commencement./Key Jones-Ford

commencement at the Barclays Center has a required end time to accommodate our exit, the cleanup, and the setup for another graduation ceremony that afternoon,” the email reads.

Catherine Freeland, the Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Communications, provided further details on the conflicting schedule.

“Final details about the ceremony, including timing and format, were dependent on confirmation from the venue, which took longer than anticipated,” Freeland told The Vanguard.

Freeland also said that it is always the intention to keep students informed, and they are “[...] continuing to look at ways to improve communication moving forward.”

The change to commencement and the lack of clarity on the matter have sparked outrage among BC seniors, with several students taking to social media to voice their frustration.

Ifeoma Ezike, a graduating senior, has been vocal about the BC

administration’s actions, utilizing her social media platform to advocate for changes to the decision.

“We are calling for a clear message from the administration to help us understand what is going on, what is the solution, and how we are going to be taking care of this,” Ezike said in her initial video, posted both to TikTok and Instagram.

“I expected a traditional ceremony like last year’s, where graduates walk across the stage and are recognized individually [...] I didn’t expect that to change.” Ezike told The Vanguard.

Ezike has also responded to commenters who mentioned that BC is returning to how commencement was done in the past.

“We understand that there are logistical challenges and time constraints. But, just because something was done a certain way before does not mean it has to continue that way, especially when recent graduating classes were given the opportunity to walk across the stage and have their names called.”

Along with several other accounts, Ezike has started the hashtag “#LetUsWalk” in

response to the decision. This includes changing their profile pictures to a headshot of the BC mascot, “Buster the Bulldog,” wearing a graduation cap, with the words “Let Us Walk” beneath him.

Other student-led actions include two separate petitions demanding that BC allow students to walk across the stage. Both petitions combined have garnered over 9,000 signatures as of the time of writing this article.

The announcement has also made city-wide attention with local news organizations, News 12 Brooklyn, and CBS News reporting on the matter.

The plan for commencement, according to Freeland, is to recognize students by academic discipline and by school, such as the School of Business and the School of Humanities. The ceremony starts with graduate students and will be followed by undergraduate students.

Students have the opportunity to have a picture and a short message displayed on a Jumbotron during the ceremony. The deadline for such was extended to May 1.

Names will not be called during the ceremony, and students will not receive a physical diploma.

Commencement is set to take place as planned on May 28 in The Barclays Center.

Students who plan to opt out of commencement can email Student Affairs to process any returns and refunds.

Singer d4vd Charged With First-Degree Murder of 14-Year-Old Girl



David Anthony Burke's mugshot on April 20, 2026./
Courtesy of the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office via
Wikimedia Commons

By Emily Nixon
News Editor

Alternative-pop singer d4vd, whose legal name is David Anthony Burke, aged 21, was arrested on April 16 for the murder of 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez. He was charged with her murder on April 20 and has since pleaded not guilty, according to CNN.

"When [Hernandez] threatened to expose his criminal conduct and devastate his musical career, Burke allegedly murdered her, cut up her body, and stuffed her body in two bags that were placed in the front trunk of his car," Los Angeles (LA) County District Attorney (DA) Nathan Hochman said in a press release. "There the dismembered body sat for over four months decomposing until it was found at a tow yard on Sept. 8, 2025. This horrific and gruesome murder committed by the charged sexual predator is shocking and appalling. To Celeste's loved ones, we will get the justice you

seek and deserve."

The car where Hernandez's remains were stored was abandoned not far from a home Burke had been renting in the Hollywood Hills, where it was later towed and left in an impound lot, as reported by CNN.

An employee at the impound lot noticed a foul odor emanating from the Tesla and called the police, who then searched the Tesla.

Hernandez's remains were found hidden in a double-zippered bag and a trash bag in the Tesla, according to Hernandez's autopsy report. The remains were found the day after her 15th birthday.

The LA DA's Office alleged that Burke had a sexual relationship with Hernandez, starting when she was just 13 years old.

"Celeste was just a child, under 14 years old, when David Burke allegedly engaged in repeated lewd and lascivious sexual relations with her," said Hochman in the press release.

Los Angeles (LA) County Deputy District Attorney Beth Silverman told CNN that investigators found "a significant amount of child pornography" on Burke's iPhone, which will be used against him during the trial.

The investigation uncovered more than 40 terabytes of data for detectives and prosecutors to sift through to build their case against Burke.

During Burke's hearing on April 23, his defense team secured a postponement for the hearing due to the lack of discovery from the prosecution. Discovery is when either the defense or prosecution shares their evidence with the other to build their cases. Burke's next hearing will be on May 1, according to CNN.

The delay between the remains' discovery and Burke's subsequent arrest has become a point of suspicion for the public, as reported by Fox 11.

LA Police Chief Jim McDonnell told Fox 11 that multiple aspects of the investigation have caused the lengthy delays between the discovery and the arrest.

"There's an awful lot that goes into, you know, to the investigation," McDonnell explained. "The state of the body when it was found was degraded, decomposed, and that creates another set of circumstances of complexity for the investigators and the coroner's staff to be able to come up with a determination as to cause and manner of death whenever we have a death, and it's appropriate."

McDonnell continued to explain how some tests take months before investigators can use them to ready their case against a suspect.

"A toxicology has to be done on it, and a tox

takes up to six months to be able to get the results back from that, but that's critical to know what other factors, other than what might have been visible, were involved in the determination of the cause of death. So a lot of times, it takes a while to be able to get the full picture, and this was one of those cases," McDonnell told Fox 11.

Hernandez was reported as missing by her family on Feb. 14, 2024, again on March 19, 2024, and lastly on April 5, 2024. Hernandez was later seen photographed backstage at d4vd's concert at The Fonda Theatre in LA in June 2024, reported CNN.

Before these disappearances, Hernandez was seen on a Twitch stream with Burke in Jan. 2024. Burke was also photographed near Hernandez's family home before her disappearance. The last time Hernandez was photographed alive was between Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025, according to CNN.

"Steve Fischer, a private investigator hired by the owner of the property, said he uncovered a digital camera inside the house that contained photos of both Rivas and D4vd taken in late December 2024 and early January 2025," reported CNN.

Burke's lawyers have sworn to fight the charges and support Burke's innocence in statements to CNN.

"[Burke] did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez, and he was not the cause of her

death. We will vigorously defend his innocence."

In a statement from their lawyer given to ABC7 and CBS News, the Rivas Hernandez family broke their previous silence to express their gratitude to the LA Police Department's work in bringing their daughter's killer to justice.

"We would like to thank the Los Angeles Police Department and the District Attorney's Office for their hard work. We would like to thank the people of Lake Elsinore for all their support," reported CBS News, quoting the statement. "Celeste was a beautiful, strong girl who loved to sing and dance. Every Friday night was movie night, and we spent wonderful times together. We love her very much, and she always told us that she loved us. We miss her deeply."

The Rivas Hernandez family said in the statement, "All we want is Justice for Celeste."

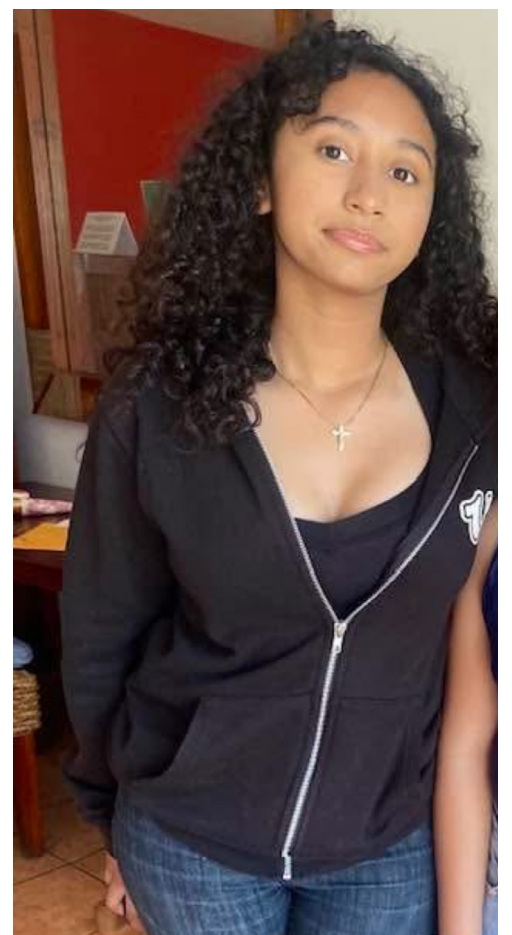


Photo of Celeste Rivas Hernandez./Courtesy of Esmeralda Lozano's GoFundMe

Trump Administration Begins Unlawful Tariff Refund

By **Schonn Elcock**
Staff Writer

Amid multiple sources of pressure ranging from a Supreme Court loss, major business and industry pushback, and consumer mistrust, the Trump administration took its first steps toward returning more than \$166 billion collected from tariffs on April 20, according to The New York Times (NYT).

Due to the administration's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which authorizes the United States (U.S.) President to regulate or prohibit foreign commerce and transactions; these tariffs have been dubbed the IEEPA Tariffs, according to Avalara.

After the tariffs were struck down, the administration attempted to slow the process by submitting a series of complaints to the Supreme Court. Notably, President Donald Trump urged the Supreme Court to hold off on the refund. He asserted that the process would

cause another "Great Depression," in a Truth Social post from Aug. 2025, but economists widely rejected the claim, according to CNBC.

In an article by AP News, "Trump's Justice Department had urged the Federal Circuit to proceed cautiously and hold off for 90 days. But the judges refused."

By mid-December of 2025, the government had collected over \$130 billion from tariffs and was currently looking to be held liable for proceedings exceeding \$175 million. However, the Trump administration remains solid in its stance of pushing for the stall and its dedication to tariffs.

Alongside the dissolution of IEEPA Tariffs, the Trump administration imposed a temporary 10% tariff on all global imports under Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act. As well as a new trade investigation into China, Mexico, the European Union, and more than a dozen other economies, to replace the IEEPA tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

According to CNBC,

Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1971 permits the U.S. to impose tariffs on imported goods from other nations found to have engaged in unfair trade practices.

The refund seems to be a benefit for all businesses who used international imports under the IEEPA tariff, allowing for major financial relief, according to The New York Times.

The aforementioned tariffs had been a heavy burden for companies that rely on foreign goods, according to The New York Times. Businesses like FedEx, Costco, and many others were forced to choose whether to absorb the financial burden, cut costs, or pass on the expenses to consumers.

The portal opened on April 20, and refunds are looking to be upwards of \$160 billion. Companies have begun submitting documentation to the government, kickstarting the process of gaining the money they have lost from paying these illegal tariffs.

The expected timeframe for issuing the refund is around 60 to 90 days, according to the NYT.

Many business owners remain pessimistic, feeling unlikely the government will actually refund the tariff expenses within that time period.

In the article, Cassie Abel, the Founder and Chief Executive of Wild Rye, said, "I wouldn't say I'm at all optimistic that they are going to come in a timely manner."

Although companies that paid the tariffs will get their money refunded, who will pay back the consumers?

Due to the tariffs, companies raised prices at the consumers' expense. Yet there is no plan underway to pay back the consumers who paid for these unlawful tariffs. The extent to which consumers may see gains relies on how each business decides to share its proceeds.

"While 12 of the 25 chief financial officers said their company plans to apply for tariff refunds, none said they intend to directly share that money with customers. Six of those polled said they did not plan to pass on any portion of the tariff refunds they might receive, seven were not sure, and 12 answered

'not applicable,'"

stated a survey done by CNBC. "Due to the heavy toll U.S. businesses had to incur in the form of higher costs and supply chain adjustments, many CFOs [Chief Finance Officers] think of the tariffs as a form of compensation instead of extra

revenue, enabling them to hold onto the cash instead of distributing it to consumers."

When it comes to this large pool of proceedings, the American people remain unable to get a hold of their fair share. However, not all efforts to push for a refund have been stalled, as bipartisan support to achieve unity on this issue continues.

Although no legislation has been approved yet, several tariff refund bills have been introduced in Congress. Senator Josh Hawley, R-MO, introduced the American Worker Rebate Act of 2025 last year, and Senator Martin Heinrich, D-N.M, introduced a bill in March that would create a tax rebate. A bill that would serve as a reimbursement for overpaid taxes or special government payments, intended to help those who were hit harder by higher costs, according to CNBC.

As efforts to help Americans from both sides of the political spectrum continue to proceed, there is hope for more bipartisan decisions with the well-being of Americans in mind. Both republican-appointed and democrat-appointed judges supported the idea that the IEEPA tariffs were unlawful, helping pave the way for refunds to begin.



Industrial port with containers in Hong Kong./Courtesy of Timelab on Unsplash

Hungry For Justice: Home Aides Demand an End to 24-hour shifts

By Mars Marte
Content Creator

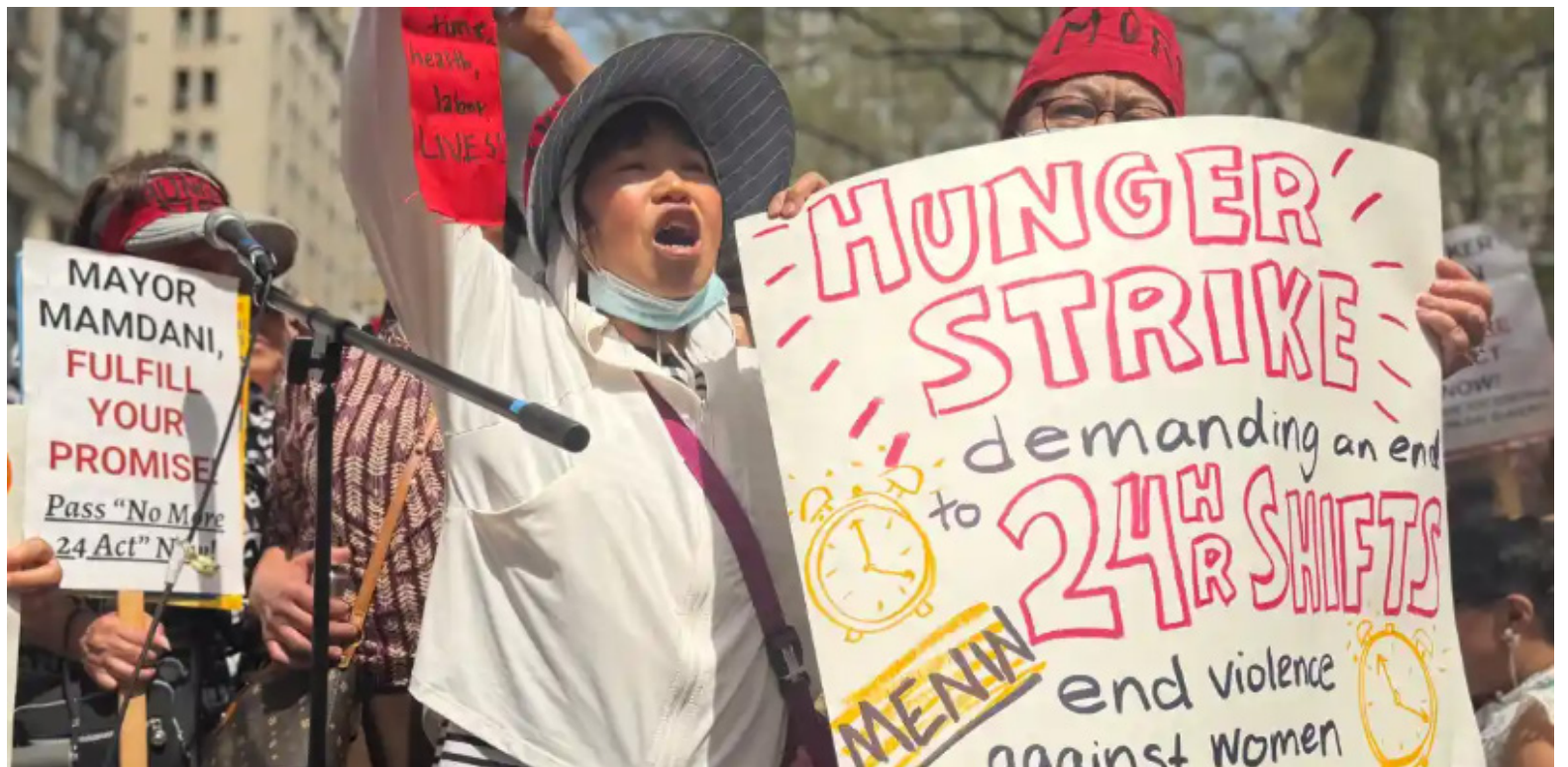
Thursday, April 16, marked the beginning of a 24-hour hunger strike by home care workers after decades of fighting New York (NY) State Legislation.

The current working regulations allow providers to pay employees for only 13 hours of their 24-hour working day. This regulation is allowed because the state also requires workers to be allotted uninterrupted three-meal breaks and five hours of sleep. In practice, these benefits seem to be nonexistent, with workers clocking in nearly 96 hours, as confessed by Yunfang Zhang, a member of the home aides workforce and the current strike, to reporters at the Brooklyn Eagle.

Such drastic measures have been taken after workers demanded that city officials introduce and pass Bill Int. 303, most commonly known as the “No More 24 Act.” With this act in place, home care workers would have the means to end exploitative policies, allowing for those who dedicate themselves to others’ well-being to have their own needs met.

The “No More 24 Act,” which was introduced by Councilman Christopher Marte on Jan. 29, would prohibit home care employers from assigning any home care employee a shift that is longer than 12 hours, consecutive 12-hour shifts, or shifts totaling more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period.

Furthermore, the bill seeks to end 96-hour



Strikers advocating for the “No More 24 Act”./Courtesy of Renee DeLorenzo from QNS.com

workweeks, barring employers from assigning more than 56 hours per week to a home care employee, unless an employee consents in writing to excess hours.

If the bill were to come into effect, it would empower the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) to conduct investigations of violations of this bill and impose a \$500 fine on violators.

The act has not been scheduled for a vote, despite Speaker Julie Menin promising to have the bill passed in April.

With grueling hours like these and the lack of a work-life balance, employees are at a higher risk of suffering from extreme fatigue, and home care workers like Reina Caba, who told reporters at Documented. “Because I’m strong, they always gave me the bedridden patients, and all the years of turning them hurt my back [...] I had to keep working despite the pain because I had to take care of the children and pay the rent”.

The sustainability of patient care has been a concern for the bill’s opponents and those

reliant on the care home aides provide, such as reporter Julia Yopez-Macbeth from AMNY, who fears the repercussions of eliminating the 24-hour work shifts.

In a letter sent by over a dozen advocacy groups addressed to Menin, Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and the City Council, the groups sympathize with the home aides, but also argue that “all people with disabilities deserve the ability to live in the community and to get the care they need to do so, without the threat that they will lose the services they deserve or that they will end up in an institution.”

Furthermore, advocacy groups question how the split shifts will be financed due to home care’s primary source of funds being Medicaid, an entity the city has no control over.

Supporters of the act stand tall against the opposition, highlighting that pitting workers and patients against one another distracts from the main beneficiary of the current system in place, insurance companies’ profit margins.

“[Legal Aid is] selling out both workers and disabled people in favor of the profits of insurance companies,” stated in a testimony from a young disabled worker on NoMore24. “The system wants to exploit people for as much profit as possible. [...] People cannot be subjected to abusive conditions for the sake of insurance company profits.”

Those on the frontlines of the strike further state on their official website, insurance companies, such as New York Healthfirst, purposefully keep home aides understaffed and underpaid in order to suppress labor costs.”

While the fight centers on labor conditions, its impact extends far beyond the workforce. Home care aides are responsible for some of the city’s most vulnerable residents.

Fatigue from healthcare workers can lead to mistakes, delayed responses, and emotional burnout, ultimately affecting the very people the system is meant to protect.

The striking aides aim to secure the right to reject 24-hour shifts

while preserving the lives of their patients at home, rather than in an institution.

Mimi Rosenberg, a Senior Staff Attorney at Legal Aid Society, wrote a letter to support those protesting.

“But the real choice is not between humane working conditions and patient care. It is whether we continue to prioritize insurer margins, or restructure public funding so care remains at home—safely and with dignity.”

The longer the bill stalls, the longer workers remain in conditions many describe as unsustainable. Organizers of the hunger strike stress how it is no longer just a policy debate; it is a matter of survival.

Whether through public pressure, political accountability, or continued organizing, the outcome of this fight will determine not only the future of home care work in New York City but the standard of care for thousands who depend on it.

A Sit Down with BC's Mexican Heritage Student Association (MEHSA)

By T'Neil Gooden
Features Editor

Brooklyn College's (BC) Mexican Heritage Student Association (MEHSA) is making its stamp on BC and across CUNY by reviving club collaboration, community, and fun.

"MEHSA is a community, and building a cultural understanding of what it means to be a Mexican or a first-generation Mexican American student amongst a large community here at Brooklyn College," said Elizabeth Vargas, Social Media Manager at MEHSA.

MEHSA was reestablished on campus in the Fall of 2025, and they want to see the club continue to grow and continue to foster inclusivity amongst the student body. MEHSA was made possible by President Alejandro Hernandez, Co-founder Kristal Ramirez, Club connector Ari Tirado, and Co-founder and faculty advisor Leslie Ramirez-Carbajal.

"There was a mutual agreement that Brooklyn College lacked representation of Mexican culture and students, almost a necessity during these times of increased xenophobia and prejudice," Tirado said. "After months of planning and outreach, spearheaded by Kriss and Leslie, the first e-board of MEHSA was established, and that is where we are today!"

Members described what being a part of the MEHSA community means to them.

"[MEHSA] provides a warm feeling, a home feeling, on campus for everybody to kind of



MEHSA with members of the BC community./Courtesy of Ari Tirado

unify under the same type of circumstances and situations that they came from," said Jayme Escobar, Vice President of MEHSA.

Grounding itself on being a safe space for students, MEHSA emphasizes the importance of making relationships with the students they are surrounded by every single day.

"I think what draws people to our events is the fact that we're able to build real relationships with our members outside of our club time," Vargas said. "We've had super loyal members that have been there since our first event last September, who we're actually personally close with to this day. I think people like that sense of authenticity from us because I feel like you don't really get that."

Tirado added to Vargas's message of authenticity.

"We also make sure people are comfortable, and they feel like they can share who they are with us, and the kind of culture that we are bringing to campus," he said.

The club's multicultural events continue to gain traction on the BC campus, with an average

of over seventy students attending each experience.

"I think what makes us stand out a little more would be the type of energy that we bring," Escobar said. "I feel like the community can kind of engage and be able to piggyback and bounce off of each other's energies, which is kind of what sets the environment for all of us."

Eboard members want students to know that MEHSA prioritizes working with communities within and outside of BC. MEHSA has collaborated with other CUNY colleges, such as Baruch, Hunter, Lehman, and BMCC, to name a few.

"I think that's the beauty of being a member of the community as well, not only being able to find a community on campus but also finding a community externally," Vargas said. "Joining MEHSA, it had never crossed my mind that I would have a relationship with the other CUNY Mexican clubs, like across CUNY, but now I do, and it's great."

MEHSA also expressed the importance of

working with those clubs and communities that are next-door neighbors.

"Something very unique to Brooklyn College is that they have the Haitian Studies Institute. And to know that we can partner with the CUNY MSI, Mexican Studies Institute," said Ramirez-Carbajal. "I think that's something beautiful and that can continue to uplift the work that the team is already doing."

Emphasizing the importance of working as a team, MEHSA prioritizes holding each other and themselves accountable for the club duties.

"I think as a team, we do well with preparation beforehand in terms of what we want, where we're having our event, and what the event is about, because all of that has to be done quickly," said Maria De La Cruz, treasurer for MEHSA. "Sometimes we get so sidetracked with other things and planning other events. And I think that because we're always holding each other accountable, nothing really gets missed, and things get done very quickly."

MEHSA's influence continues to spread as other clubs are beginning to spread their wings following the revival of the MEHSA community.

"As a result of MEHSA's own creation, the Ecuadorian Student Association (ESA) came to be," Tirado said.

MEHSA members want students to know that this is a club for students, run by students, so multitasking as college students is a first-hand experience for many people on MEHSA's team.

"It's definitely been tricky. But it's time coordination that will help you the most, and actually dedicating the time," Tirado said. "Determination is also the other biggest factor. So being determined to actually stay on top of your work."

MEHSA is looking for more members to join their team, but before the semester ends, students can look forward to more MEHSA events.

"Students can be on the lookout for an end-of-year event since we will be reaching the full year of MEHSA by the end of the school year," Tirado said. "We're gonna hopefully turn out and really party pretty hard for those final events."

Students interested in MEHSA can visit their Instagram, @bc.mehsa25.

Coffee Across Continents: MENA and Latin-American Student Clubs Host “Café Del Mundo”

By **Renae Visico**
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, April 21, the Brooklyn College (BC) Middle Eastern North African (MENA) Club, in collaboration with the Mexican Heritage Student Association (MEHSA), Puerto Rican Alliance (PRA), and Ecuadorian Student Association (ESA), held its first “Café Del Mundo” event in the Student Center.

“Café Del Mundo” is MENA’s first event as a BC club, serving as its introduction to the campus.

“The decision to start MENA at Brooklyn College came from noticing the lack of a space representing Middle Eastern and North African students,” MENA President Asal Alfaraji told *The Vanguard*. “The idea to start with a multicultural café came from the fact that coffee is universal, especially across both [MENA and Latin American] regions. It felt like the perfect way to bring people together and introduce the sense of community MENA aims to build at Brooklyn College.”

Seeing diversity and representation through this event was many students’ main reason for attending.

“I came because I like going to MEHSA’s events, as I am Mexican, too,” said James Hernandez, a business administration student. “And I saw that there were a lot of countries, so it seemed like a really interesting event to come to.”

“I personally like drinking coffee. It’s usually what I drink every morning,” added finance student Nancy Flores. “Since I saw [the café] was going to be from different clubs, I was curious to see what kinds of different coffees different clubs would have.”

“Café Del Mundo” opened with an informative presentation by all four



“Café Del Mundo” organizers and attendees display the flags represented in the event./
Renae Visico

student clubs describing the history of coffee and the inspiration behind the food and drinks they chose to present.

“Over time, coffee became a part of daily life. It’s part of social gatherings in many Arab countries,” said Alfaraji. “It’s served to guests as a sign of respect and generosity, which is what we hope you guys get from all of us today.”

MEHSA brought café de olla, a coffee known for its bitter taste complemented by sweet hints of cinnamon. They also brought traditional Mexican pan dulce with brownies made by MEHSA’s social media manager, Elizabeth Vargas.

“If you go to any Mexican store, you will find pan dulce there,” Vargas told *The Vanguard*. “It’s so easy to categorize all of us as only Latinos or only Hispanics. But once you decide to focus on what makes these [Hispanic and Latino] countries different, like coffee or bread, you’re able to appreciate each culture from each country even more.”

ESA brought traditional morocho, a thick and creamy corn pudding sprinkled with cinnamon and raisins. They also brought strawberry and vanilla wafer cookies as light snacks.

ESA’s Vice President Roselyn Zumba shares her personal connection to morochos.

“Morocho was actually made before coffee was introduced to our country,”

Zumba said. “My grandma sells morocho back in Ecuador every single Sunday, so I would go with her every single summer. So I wanted to make morocho and share it with the entire community.”

Zumba described in the presentation how morocho signifies nostalgia, which is what freshman Justin Calle was reminded of while eating it.

“My family is Ecuadorian, so this isn’t my first time trying it. I found it very delicious,” said Calle. “I loved it very much. It’s so sweet, and I do recommend it.”

PRA brought traditional café con leche, which translates to “coffee with milk” in Spanish. It is first brewed in a moka pot, a stovetop coffee maker, then added with steamed milk.

“We wanted a reason to bond over shared cultural food,” shared PRA secretary Giovali Botello. “It’s always a good thing to get people together on campus to eat and have fun

together.”

MENA

brought g a h w a , which is traditional Arabic coffee spiced with

cardamom and saffron. They also brought teas from various countries, including Yemen and Egypt.

“Drinking gahwa is not just about the coffee; it’s a cultural experience,” said MENA Vice President Rokaya Ebidou. “It’s bonding, and I think that goes across both MENA and Latin America. It’s a way to form a connection with one another.”

Students particularly enjoyed tasting a variety of cultural drinks at “Café Del Mundo.”

One BC student, Hana Begum, even mixed up the different drinks she got from each student club.

“I tried several types, and I mixed them all, so I have a lot of favorite flavors, and I can’t pick one,” shared Begum. “I tried drinks from a Yemeni table and the Ecuadorian table. The Mexican and Egyptian [drinks] were also really good.”

The impact of “Café Del Mundo” on BC students went beyond coffee and sweet treats. The event encouraged students to get out of their comfort zones by learning about other cultures and gaining more confidence in themselves.

“I tend to doubt myself and be a little too hard on myself,” said Calle. “But I feel like I was able to relax and talk to people, meet new people, and go get myself out there today.”

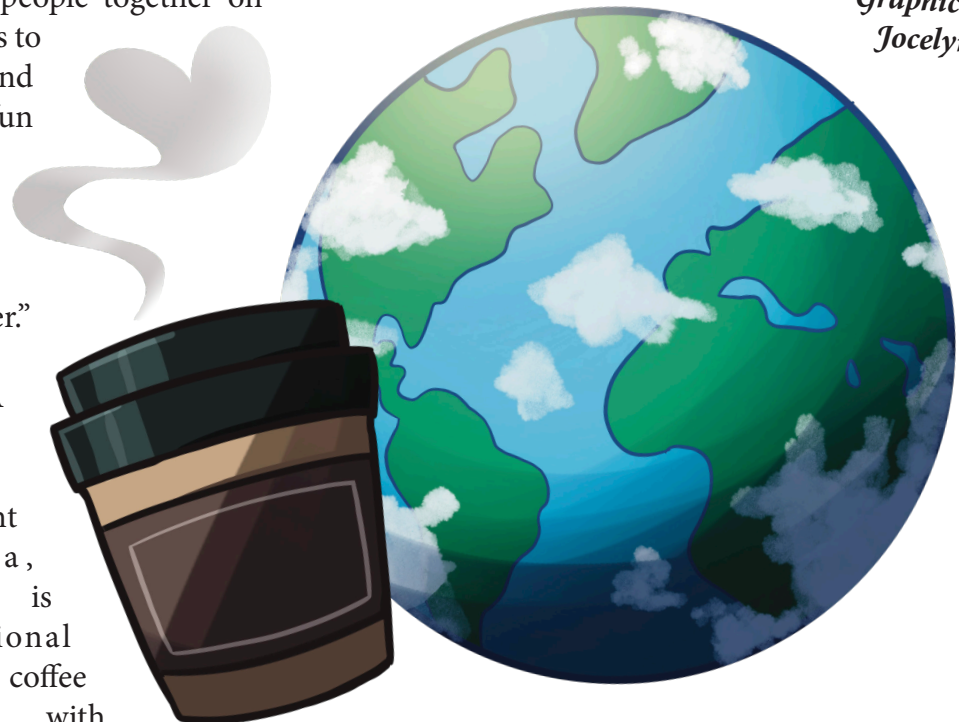
As a newly formed club on campus, MENA aims to further foster the sense of community formed through the “Café Del Mundo” and expand its impact beyond the BC campus.

“Looking ahead, I’m most excited about growing MENA into a lasting community. That includes expanding our programming, building collaborations across CUNY, and creating opportunities for cultural, social, and professional connection,” Alfaraji shared with *The Vanguard*.

“Café Del Mundo was only the beginning, and there is much more to come.”

Students interested in MENA, PRA, ESA, or MEHSA can visit their respective Instagrams: @menaculturebc; @bc_pra; @bc.esa; @bc.mehsa25

Graphic by Jocelyn Rios



Are You Smarter Than An English Intern?: Riverrun Club Hosts Literary Trivia Night

By Margot Dragos
Arts Editor

Brooklyn College’s (BC) Riverrun Club put students’ literary knowledge to the test at their first Literary Trivia Night, hosted during the day in Boylan 2307 on April 21.

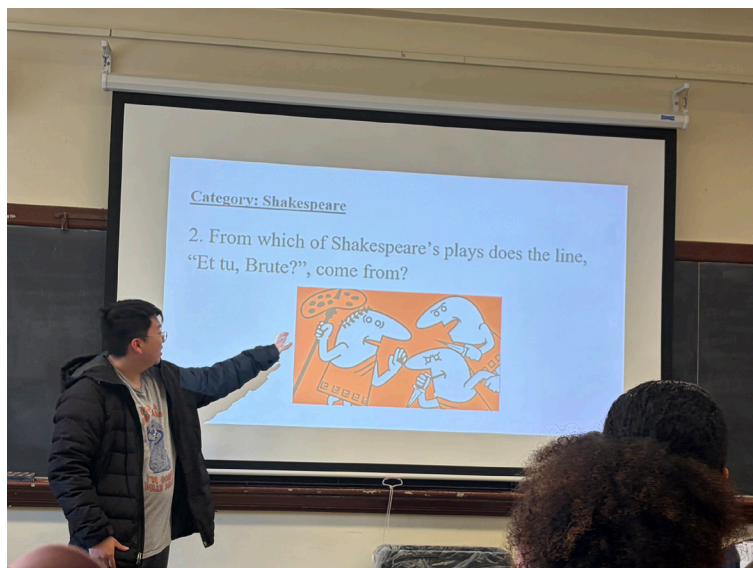
The Riverrun Club consists of interns from the English Majors’ Counseling Office. Attendees were asked questions about everything literary, from dystopian literature to graphic novels.

Nicholas “Nicky” Cai, an intern and junior majoring in English, created a “Trivia Power Team” that used their knowledge of literature to write out and fact-check dozens of questions.

“We specifically selected questions we believed would be fun but not too hard at the same time,” Cai told *The Vanguard*.

The questions were split into categories such as children’s literature, modern fiction, and fantasy. There were five questions in each category, varying in difficulty.

These questions, including: “Who is Bruce Wayne’s secret identity?” from the graphic novel



Nicholas “Nicky” Cai points to an image connected to a question./Margot Dragos

to answer. Others, such as “Which epic poem is the video game ‘Devil May Cry’ based off of?” stumped attendees.

“I was actually fairly confident all of the time,” said Sabrina Zambi, BC senior double-majoring in English and creative writing. “Many of the epic poem questions I knew, except for that one deep cut about a video game. I had no idea what that was about.”

The answer was revealed to be “The Divine Comedy” by Dante.

Daryl Blankenship, a creative writing major, confident in his knowledge of graphic novels, was stumped by a question in the category.

“First question was Black Panther’s Home Country. Knew that,” Blankenship told *The Vanguard*. “The second question,

first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize? That was kind of insane.”

However, those playing in teams were able to pool their knowledge together to answer tough questions.

“I really liked being on the team and how every single one of us has knowledge about different things,” said Mikhal Tubis, a BC junior and creative writing major who teamed up with Zambi. “I knew a lot about Shakespeare and Sabrina knew a

lot about poetry and dystopian, so it was very much a group effort, and that was a lot of fun.”

Teams worked together to write an answer for each question on a piece of paper. The interns waited until all teams were finished before progressing to the next question.

After all questions were answered, the interns collected and thoroughly graded each paper to determine a winner. BC student Fritz Philogene II won first place, a group of interns not involved with creating the questions won second, and Zambi and Tubis’s team won third, along with their teammates Natalia Urbaez and Edona Zuka.

Every attendee was given a small gold trophy with “Literary Trivia

Champion” written across its cup with a Sharpie. They left with enhanced knowledge of the literary greats, bragging rights, and new literature-obsessed friends.

Blankenship said the people were his favorite part of the event.

“The noise and personality that everybody else was bringing in the space, I really appreciated,” said Blankenship.

“It was really nice seeing people riled up about their answers and doing it in a writing and literature scope.”

Students interested in future Riverrun Club-hosted events can follow @thejunctionbc on Instagram.



L to R: Mikhal Tubis, Sabrina Zambi, Edona Zuka, and Natalia Urbaez posing with their trophies./Margot Dragos

“The Bronxer” in Brooklyn: BLMi & PRLS Hold Fifth Cafecito Lounge Featuring Alex Rivera

By Michelle Zhen
Staff Writer

On April 21, about a dozen students gathered in a semicircle hosted in Brooklyn College (BC)’s 3309 James Hall to admire selected works of professional photography from “Across the Afro-Latinx Diaspora”, as described on the promotional poster. With refreshments in hand, a screen projected an artist’s life’s work, from the residents of his dear hometown to a COVID-era graphic featuring his plants.

The Black and Latino Male Initiative (BLMI) and Puerto Rican Latin Studies (PRLS) Department hosted the fifth of their Cafecito Lounge series. This event was hosted in collaboration with artist Alex Rivera, a Dominican photographer known professionally as “The Bronxer”.

“We started the series in the fall semester, knowing that we wanted to bring in creatives that were at the intersection of the Black Latino Male Initiative and Puerto Rican and Latinx Studies. So this is a joint effort. And because we started with a lot of authors, [...] we thought, well, we’d like to culminate with a photographer,” said Dr. Carla España,

Professor in the PRLS department and co-organizer for this event.

Rivera is an accomplished photographer, graphic designer, cinematographer, muralist, and clothing designer, though his presentation focused on his work as a photographer. Born and raised in the Bronx, Rivera moved to the Dominican Republic for two years, eventually finding his way back to New York City.

“I think my favorite project is to use the land that he has in [the] Dominican Republic as a space for creatives to go and stay, [...] kind of like an artist residency. [...] He called it like a creative haus, H-A-U-S,” Dr. España recalled.

Beyond his passion projects, he has

worked with various advertisers to portray their products both accurately and appealingly. Coupled with his skills in graphic design, he takes the visions of both his clients and himself when deciding how a product may be properly portrayed.

“How do you not superimpose [what you’re taking a picture of]? How do you not take away the trash can? [...] Like, how do you not take away the crazy guy running around? Like, how do you make that also look like a Renaissance painting? So that’s what goes through my mind [...] The freedom of it,” Rivera explained.

Outside of freelance work, his work illustrates his perspective of the world and portrays it accurately to others.

Citing the Bronx as the most misunderstood

among the boroughs, Rivera spoke of his vow to show the world the truth of the Bronx and how friendly it can truly be.

“There’s so many people in the Bronx that not only love the Bronx [but also] want to expose the Bronx to a bigger platform,”

said Jeremy Aaron, a BC senior. “They’re also not afraid to tell their stories or, you

know, tell the truth, [...] anything that’s necessary.”

However, his work extends beyond what the audience sees; a huge factor in Rivera’s career is networking and maintaining professional relationships.

“The bread and butter is my social skills with people. I want you to feel as comfortable as you can when you speak with me, not like, ‘Oh my God, I’m speaking to a cyborg.’ [...] We want you to feel good that you could say ideas, and we could say yes or no to them,” Rivera said.

Rivera offered advice to the aspiring creatives who hope to work with large corporations in the future: Remember your worth and stay grounded.

“Although these corporate beings are so powerful [...], they don’t work unless you’re the one that’s giving [your work] out. You’re the one that’s bringing new customers in.”

For more information about Alex Rivera, visit his website:
www.thebronxer.com



Alex “The Bronxer” Rivera presenting to attendees./Rami Mansi

“Islamophobia is Racism”: Book Launch & Panel Discussion with BC Professor Rhea Rahman

By Aameena Khan
Staff Cartoonist

On Thursday, April 23, in the Woody Tanger Auditorium, Rhea Rahman, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brooklyn College (BC) hosted a panel discussion for the launch of her new book, “Racializing the Ummah.” The discussion was moderated by Jeanne Theoharis, Professor of Political Science at BC and featured the following panelists: Corinna Mullin, an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at BC and John Jay School of Criminal Justice, Saadia Toor, Associate Professor of Sociology at the College of Staten Island (CSI), and Christina John, staff attorney on the Legal Team at the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NY). Racializing refers to the act of imposing social, political, and cultural categorization onto groups of people that did not previously identify as such. Throughout the panel, the discussion centered on the anthropological lens regarding how the term “Muslim” is utilized as a perceived racial category in today’s society.

Rahman highlights in her book how not only are Muslims racialized under Western imperialism and white supremacy, but also how those racial hierarchies persist within the “ummah”, or Muslim community, as well as the City University of New York’s (CUNY) failure to protect their Muslim students and staff.

“Racializing the Ummah” serves as an ethnography—a qualitative, in-depth study of human cultures and societies from long-term immersive observation and participation—of Rahman’s

experience in charitable work. This work can be seen in her contributions to the Muslim humanitarian organization, Islamic Relief, and its limitations regarding a critical empirical question of “What does it mean to do good?”

“There are these universal values of preserving human life, and how universal they are, yet never post-colonial critique about the hegemony of Western ideas,” Rahman elaborates. “I was curious if an Islamic organization was different, and it ended up with racializing the ummah as broadly thinking about how our Muslims, as a group, racialized, both in the U.S., but also transnationally and globally.”

Rahman considers both her experiences as a non-Black person of color working in Africa with “Islamic Relief” and her personal experience growing up in a racially segregated Muslim community, causing her ideas of race to clash frequently. “[...] and so thinking of how Muslims as a group are racialized, asking this question of what it means to do good forces me to confront both how Muslims are a group of people, racialized, but then also, how does racialization happen within Muslims?”

Rahman challenges the Western depiction of the “good, moderate Muslim” that is “depoliticized” in the Western world and made to resist or question imperialism.

“As soon as Muslims make political claims of ‘What kind of world am I seeing?’ Or what it means to be free, what is liberation, or what is justice. As soon as those ideas of, as those ethics kind of come into conflict with Western imperialism, hegemonic ideas, racial capitalism, that is then when the Muslim becomes a problem.”

Rahman stresses how the racialization of Muslims did not begin on 9/11, but rather was amplified after the attacks by increasing the pressure on Muslims in the West to present themselves as “the good

Muslim.”

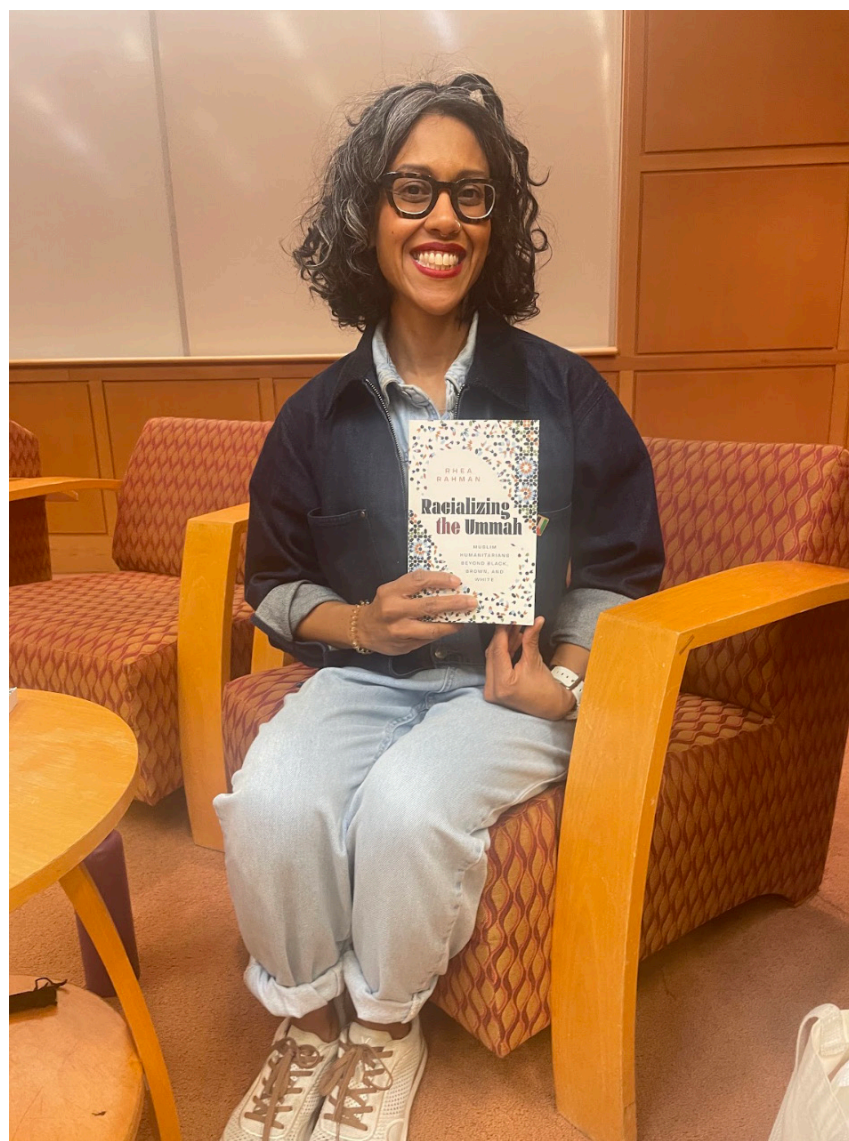
This can be seen as Muslims working with “Islamic Relief” to pose as “non-threatening” in a world where Muslim becomes synonymous with “problematic” under a Western organization. This establishes a more “palpable” Islam that does not question Western imperialism and its role in destabilizing the same nations it provides aid for, emphasizing the racial hierarchies that are further normalized by Muslim aid workers in Islamic humanitarian organizations.

“Islamic Relief” is a [United Kingdom] (UK)-based Islamic organization. So I was interested to study them because it forces a confrontation with the idea that Islam is completely antithetical to the West,” according to Rahman. “They’re both a Western organization, and they’re working in the UK with kind of Western partners, and they’re Muslim. And so they have to be ‘the good Muslim.’”

Rahman then emphasizes the terms “islamophobia” and “anti-Muslim racism” in her ethnographic work to define what discrimination against Muslims has been labeled as throughout history.

“I mentioned in the book, people who started using anti-Muslim racism were foregrounding white supremacy in their analysis. And more often, capitalism, as opposed to Islamophobia, was coming from another kind of disciplinary lineage that was more post-colonial, de-colonial, and was naming the West and modernity, which is also really important because of the important kind of line of thinking and scholarship.”

Rahman contrasts islamophobia with anti-Muslim racism, which targets racial dynamics, racial capitalism, and surveillance. However, Rahman additionally highlighted the historic importance of the use of the term “islamophobia” used by UK Muslims to emphasize epistemic violence



Rhea Rahman holding her book, “Racializing the Ummah”./Aameena Khan

and the politicization of Muslims by the state.

“[Islamophobia] comes from the Muslim community in the UK. To me, because there have been ways of recognizing, I think there’s parallels with the origin of using Islamophobia to antisemitism; a name for racial targeting of a religious community and identity. Muslims in the UK trace it particularly after what’s called, like, the rushing affair and the targeting, the protest [...] and the ways the state responds to Muslims. It’s traced as a moment of kind of politicization of the Muslim community in the UK. And given the targeting from the state, people start using this term.”

Rahman and other panelists discussed the surveillance of Muslims and erasure of Islamophobia being addressed on campus and concluded by raising the question: “Is it the job of the institution to protect its students?”

“Columbia University and the City University of New York were rated the most ‘Hostile Campuses,’ each with an extremely low percentage score of just 2%,” according to CAIR’s 2025 Hostile Campus Ratings Report, research contributed by Christiana John, an attorney who has

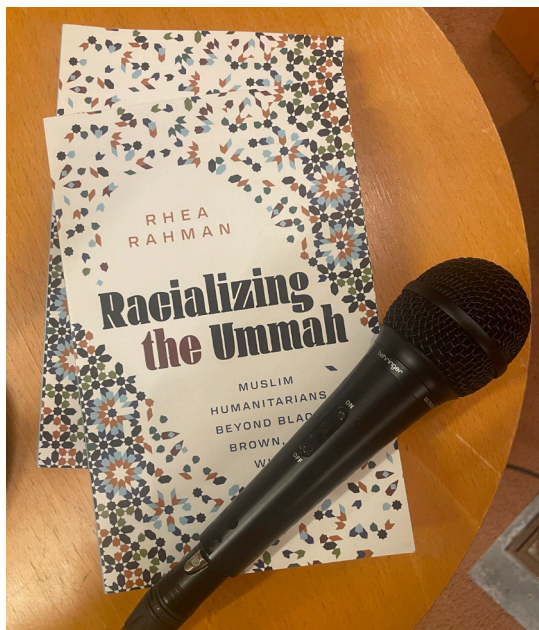
assisted Muslim students affected by CUNY policy. “A Hostile Campus’ is one where institutional actions or campus climate make students feel unsafe, targeted, or discriminated against.”

One student in the audience agreed with John, emphasizing that the Muslim Student Association has historically been singled out, provided small spaces to gather, and faced difficulties with arranging rooms for Muslim students to pray.

John critiqued the lack of policies protecting Muslim students at CUNY.

“You’re just not even acknowledging that Muslim students, who, by the way, are not a monolith. Muslim students have a very different experience. Our students who are perceived as Muslim also have a very different experience at CUNY and can experience a very specific kind of discrimination at CUNY.”

To purchase Rhea Rahman’s book, you can visit the University of Minnesota Press’ website.



“Racializing the Ummah” Book./Aameena Khan

Tethered: Why You Shouldn't Separate The Artist From The Art

By Serena Edwards
Opinions Editor

When an artist produces a project, it not only reflects a part of them, but it is a piece of who they are. For many musical artists, their songs reflect pieces of their lives and the situations they have gone through. For fashion designers, they create shows and pieces that make a statement that stands true to their beliefs.

As a consumer of art, what are the boundaries taken to make sure that there is no support for artists who go against our moral compass? This has been an ongoing debate, which ultimately coined the phrase, "separating the art from the artist." This phrase signifies artists not being held accountable for their actions by their fans for the sake of consumer satisfaction.

R&B singer Chris Brown announced his collaboration tour with Grammy-award-winning singer Usher. While Brown's reputation has Usher fans questioning the collaboration, fans are still looking to purchase tickets, which contradicts the original concern and disgust toward Brown's behavior. The pair has many hit songs, such as "New Flame", "Party (Remix)", and "Back to Sleep (Remix)", which makes the tour enticing to fans.

Brown has a long history of being the perpetrator of domestic violence, with the most recognized incident being with his ex-girlfriend, who he dated from 2007 to

2009, global icon Rihanna. The couple, at the time, were leaving a party when they began arguing, which escalated into a physical altercation. This incident made headlines with Brown being sentenced to five years of probation and community service. But this wasn't his only incident; his pattern continued from 2011 to 2015 with actress Karrueche Tran, which ended with a five-year no-contact order filed against him. He says he regrets it, but his patterns show otherwise.

Though fans recognize the dangerous patterns of his behavior, his tours still sold out, and his albums continuously hit the Billboard charts.

"During the Washington, D.C. leg of his Breezy Bowl XX tour, the R&B-pop singer reportedly became the first artist ever to sell out Nationals Park 'three nights in a row,' stated Parade.

In cases where you would hold friends and other colleagues accountable, artists are exempt from backlash because of the rose-colored glasses fans wear for their favorite creators.

But this isn't the only artist who has never felt the financial consequences for their action. Kanye

West, also referred to as Ye, has been known for making controversial and anti-semitic comments, some of which include but are not limited to: "Slavery was a choice" and naming a song that praised Nazi Germany leader, Adolf Hitler.

Ye has also featured a swastika on his commerce website, receiving backlash that he apologized for.

According to the New York Times (NYT), Ye expressed, "I am so sorry to have let you down [...]" "I'm not asking for sympathy, or a free pass, though I aspire to earn your forgiveness."

But the sincerity of his apology faded quickly, with Ye's actions reverting to the way they were before. His fans also fell short, with Ye selling out his latest concert in the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, following the release of his latest album, "Bully".

All forms of art have faced scandals that are swept under the rug due to support from fans and other partnerships.

Fashion is another sector of art where, though the designer is problematic, people still choose to purchase from

their brand. Famous designer brands like Gucci have perpetuated racial stereotypes through their clothing throughout the years.

In 2019, the brand released a "Blackface" sweater, which retailed for \$890. The sweater featured a black turtleneck and included a red mouth design made to cover the customer's mouth.

For context, Blackface was used in derogatory shows called "Minstrel shows" to push negative stereotypes towards the Black community.

The problems aren't limited only to luxury brands; H&M, a brand whose prices are catered towards an average consumer, has also contributed to racial stereotypes. In 2018, H&M marketed a sweater that said "Coolest monkey in the jungle," which was modeled by a young Black boy.

Social media voiced their outrage, which led H&M to take the photo down from their website, though the sweater was still available for purchase. This not only shows the power that fans hold but also the energy we should continue to have towards artists.

According to the BBC, "The

period of controversy. "While the decrease reflects continued pressure on the business, it marks a less severe fall than in previous quarters. In short, it's a sign that things put in place to recover may be starting to work," according to Culted.

If we continue to support the brands or artists that have negatively impacted communities, we ultimately give the creator the "okay" for their behavior because of a lack of consequences. We have seen it time and time again, but the question is, "What can we do?"

Ultimately, the best way to go about this is to use your power and boycott. This not only holds the creator accountable but also enables the consumer to have power. We have been able to see the influence society has on how people act and treat others.

In the same way we hold our friends accountable for their conduct, artists, designers, and brands can not be exempt from that same level of scrutiny. We still contribute to their success and how they curate their projects. Art is not made to put others down or to spread negativity.

When brands use their platform for negativity, it is important as a consumer to let them know there is no support for that art.

Be

mindful of the art you are consuming and ask yourself the question of whether or not you would support people in your circle if they did the same thing.

company said: "This image has now been removed from all H&M channels, and we apologize to anyone this may have offended"

Though the brand was held accountable, sales are looking better than during the

Graphic by
Jocelyn Rios



Belief vs. Bigotry: Rethinking Religion as a Defense for Homophobia in Athletics

By Manuel Polanco
Sports Editor

Back in 2022, the Detroit Pistons selected guard Jaden Ivey as the No. 5 overall pick in the National Basketball Association (NBA) draft. He was seen as a key player in the rebuilding of the Pistons' future, but fast forward to 2026, and Ivey isn't on the Pistons, let alone playing basketball professionally.

Before his trajectory plummeted, the cracks began to show during his second year in the league. Ivey randomly went on a rant postgame about how Jesus was coming back. But before we continue, let's make one thing clear: sports and religion are synonymous with one another, and many players practice their faith no matter what said faith is. Believing in a higher power is perfectly okay, and it is beautiful to see people practice their faith.

The issue arises when a player, especially a Black athlete, is going

through a clear mental health struggle, and people choose to ignore their pleas, instead clinging to the religious psychosis filled rants. Not only that, but using their faith as a means to be homophobic and perpetuate homophobic talking points. If these athletes are strong in their faith, then why are they so quick to judge someone for their sexuality? The message is clear: Athletes should not use their faith as an excuse to perpetuate homophobia.

In a press conference back in 2024, Ivey told reporters, "Jesus is coming back, and we all have to repent for our sins." This is a very strange thing to say in a post-game interview to reporters, and many noted how he never did this in his rookie year.

Things came to a head when Ivey fractured his fibula on New Year's Day 2025, during a game against the Orlando Magic. This incident is where many suspect Ivey's mental health took a turn for the worse. His hot start to the season was cut short. After this

injury, Ivey was plagued with minor injuries that impacted his play, and he came back on Nov. 22, but it was obvious he was not the same player he used to be. He wound up riding the bench for two games before getting traded to the Chicago Bulls.

His tenure in Chicago didn't start well, as he didn't play in his first game there. After getting shut down on March 26, Ivey took to Instagram live to say, "The world can proclaim LGBTQ, right? They proclaim Pride Month. And the NBA, they proclaim it. They show it to the world. They say, 'Come join us for Pride Month, to celebrate unrighteousness.' They proclaim it on the billboards. They proclaim it in the streets. Unrighteousness."

Something was off with Ivey's behavior.

Why was he randomly going off on homophobic tangents? And most importantly, is he okay? Having a major injury like a fractured fibula and then dealing with setbacks must have taken a toll on him.

Ivey's comments would turn towards his family in another Instagram live on March 31.

"Those who are around me, those who are my family members are betraying (me) because of what I said. The truth. Betraying me. Saying that I'm losing my mind. Saying that I'm crazy. Saying that I don't know the truth," Ivey said. "These are my own family members who love me. My blood. Those who raised me saying that I don't know the truth. 'Man, he's psycho.' He's this, he's that. Those are my own household. All because of the gospel. All because I said the truth."

The answer was clear: Ivey was struggling with a mental health situation that led him to be emotionally disturbed and start saying absurd things that really don't make sense. Instead of coming to his aid, many people, including fellow athletes, poked fun at the athlete or joined in his religious babble that held no merit to justify their homophobic ideals.

New England Patriots Running Back TeVeyon

Henderson used this opportunity to side with Ivey and tweeted out in support of Ivey, quoting the Bible's Matthew 5:10.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10).

Unfortunately, this is not new in the sports world; many athletes use their faith to shield themselves from backlash when they're being homophobic.

Society does not care about the struggles and mental health of many Black athletes.

It has been a month since this incident took place, and the hope is that Ivey is getting the help he needs, but no matter what, homophobia is not acceptable by anyone, let alone athletes. They should not use their faith to attack others; instead, they should try to bring those together who may need guidance or help.



NBA shooting guard Jaden Ivey./Courtesy of Givemesports.com